

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 08627 180659Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 SSM-03  
/060 W

----- 054230 /21

R 171444Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 980  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 8627

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, SY  
SUBJECT: MORE ON REPORTED COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST SARG

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 8572, (B) DAMASCUS 8571, (C) DAMASCUS 8542

1. EMBOFF MET DECEMBER 16 WITH LOCAL JOURNALIST WHO HAD  
RECENTLY RETURNED FROM TRIP ABROAD. SOURCE, WHO HAS OFTEN  
PROVIDED RELIABLE INFORMATION IN PAST AND MAINTAINS CON-  
TACT WITH YOUNG SYRIAN OFFICERS, SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT  
DURING HIS ABSENCE TWO CELLS OF ALAWITE OFFICERS AND NCO'S  
HAD BEEN UNCOVERED. ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION, ONE  
GROUP CONSISTED OF PRO-JADID OFFICERS AND SECOND CONTAINED  
PERSONNEL SYMPATHETIC TO THE LATE MAJOR GENERAL MUHAMMAD  
UMRAN. HE SPECULATED THEIR ACTIVITIES MAY NOT HAVE BEEN  
COORDINATED. HE DID NOT KNOW WHO WAS LEADER OF JADID GROUP,  
BUT HE HAD HEARD LATTER HEADED BY CAPTAIN RAIQ NUQQARI  
(HIS PROUNUNCIATION).

2. SOURCE STATED THAT HE USED TO KNOW NUQQARI QUITE  
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WELL, BUT HAD SEEN LITTLE OF HIM DURING PAST FEW MONTHS.  
HE DESCRIBED HIM AS "TOTALLY CRAZY" AND PROMOTER OF  
SOME PRETTY RIDICULOUS THEORIES AND SAID HE COULD NOT  
ACCEPT AT FACT VALUE SUGGESTION THAT NUQQARI LEADER OF  
GROUP PLOTTING COUP. HE SAID THAT, "FROM WHAT I KNOW OF  
THIS MAN, PLOTTING A COUP WOULD BE THE LAST THING TO

ENTER HIS MIND." HE EXPRESSED REAL DOUBT WHETHER NUQQARI WAS LEADER OF THIS CELL.

3. SOURCE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND NCO'S INVOLVED WAS BETWEEN 100 AND 600; HE SAID HE WOULD OBTAIN MORE PRECISE FIGURE SOON. HE SAID IT WAS "INTERESTING" THAT CELLS UNCOVERED SHORTLY AFTER KHADDAM'S ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION. ARREST OF SUCH A LARGE GROUP CERTAIN TO CAUSE SOME CONFUSION IN RANKS OF OFFICER CORPS, HE ASSERTED, BECAUSE GROUP DISPERSED AMONG VARIOUS UNITS. BUT MOST IMPORTANT FALLOUT WOULD BE EFFECT ON PRESIDENT ASAD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS OWN ALAWITE SECT. HE STATED ASAD'S RELATIONS WITH ALAWITE COMMUNITY WERE IN STATE OF "CHAOS."

4. SOURCE STATED THAT DISCOVERY OF TWO CELLS WAS PROBABLY WORK OF SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES, WHICH "AS YOU KNOW CONTAIN LARGE NUMBER OF SUNNIS." (NOTE: ADNAN DABBAGH, MININTERIOR AND FORMER HEAD OF GENERAL INTELLIGENCE; HIS REPORTED REPLACEMENT, ALI MADANI; AND FORMER CHIEF OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HIKMAT SHIHABI ARE ALL SUNNIS, BUT ALAWITES HOLD MANY KEY LEADERSHIP SLOTS -- MUHAMMAD KHULI AT AF INTELLIGENCE, ALI DUBBA AT MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, AND OTHERS.) HE NOTED THAT SUNNIS IN REGIME WOULD PROBABLY BENEFIT FROM THIS INCIDENT.

5. COMMENT: SOURCE'S ALLEGATION THAT TWO SEPARATE ALAWITE CELLS POSSIBLY FUNCTIONING WITHOUT COORDINATION MAY ACCOUNT FOR VARYING VERSIONS OF INCIDENT WE HAVE PICKED UP. HIS IMPLICATION THAT SUNNI ELEMENTS IN REGIME  
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MAY HAVE HAD HAND IN UNDERMINING ASAD'S TIES WITH FELLOW ALAWITES AND IN SOWING CONFUSION WITHIN OFFICER CORPS IS PROVOCATIVE.  
MURPHY

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MILITARY PERSONNEL, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, PLOTS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 17 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
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**Executive Order:** GS  
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**Film Number:** D760465-0986  
**From:** DAMASCUS  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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04 MAY 2006

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**Subject:** MORE ON REPORTED COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST SARG  
**TAGS:** PINS, SY, (ASAD, HAFIZ)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006